

“Look, You Blind, and See!”

Isaiah 42:14-21

March 15, 2026 (Lent 4-A)

St. Paul’s Lutheran, North Freedom

For a long time I have kept silent, I have been quiet and held myself back. But now, like a woman in childbirth, I cry out, I gasp and pant. I will lay waste the mountains and hills and dry up all their vegetation; I will turn rivers into islands and dry up the pools. I will lead the blind by ways they have not known, along unfamiliar paths I will guide them; I will turn the darkness into light before them and make the rough places smooth. These are the things I will do; I will not forsake them. But those who trust in idols, who say to images, ‘You are our gods,’ will be turned back in utter shame.

“Hear, you deaf; look, you blind, and see! Who is blind but my servant, and deaf like the messenger I send? Who is blind like the one in covenant with me, blind like the servant of the LORD? You have seen many things, but you pay no attention; your ears are open, but you do not listen.” It pleased the LORD for the sake of his righteousness to make his law great and glorious. (Isa. 42:14-21 NIV)

In the name of Jesus, the Light of the World, dear fellow believers:

“Are you blind?” Some of my family ask me that, when I can’t seem to find something that’s right out in the open. There really isn’t anything wrong with my eyes—I can see clearly with my glasses on. No, it’s because I’m not observant and I’m not paying attention.

In our text, the Lord God called his servant “blind.” “Who is blind but my servant?” He was talking to his people, the chosen children of Israel in the kingdom of Judah during Isaiah’s day, about 700 BC. They were refusing to pay attention to the prophets and the signs that the Lord was giving them. So he sent Isaiah to them to wake them up and get them to pay attention. His message is one that we need to hear today: **“Look, you blind, and see!”**

The Lord had been patient with his people. “For a long time I have kept silent, I have been quiet and held myself back.” The Lord hadn’t been absolutely silent; he had sent prophet after prophet to warn the people of their sins and idol worship. But soon, “like a woman in childbirth” the Lord was going to “cry out, gasp and pant.” As labor pains signal to the soon-to-be mother that her child is about to be born, so the Lord was about to give birth to judgment on Israel and Judah. He would “lay waste the mountains and hills and dry up all their vegetation,” he would “turn rivers into islands and dry up the pools.” Devastation of the land and its inhabitants was coming.

The Lord was specifically targeting those who trusted in idols. These were graven images, statues and icons made out of wood, stone and cast metal, such as the neighboring tribes and nations worshiped. How blind so many of the Israelites were, to bow down to these man-made objects! How could they think that a piece of wood cut from a tree, or a block of stone, or a statue made by hands, could save them from trouble and bless them with good things? Utterly blind!

Now consider the blindness of modern idolatry. Our idols might not be made of wood and stone, but often they’re of the electronic variety called TV sets and smart phones. It happens when we’d rather watch YouTube and our favorite sports team or even enjoy nature rather than going to church on a Sunday morning. Our idols are often made of paper that we fold into our wallets; we trust the almighty dollar rather than the Almighty God. All too often, we turn ourselves into idols when we love ourselves and trust our own instincts rather than God and his Word.

Don't be blind to your own sinfulness! "Look, you blind, and see!" The Lord's judgment is coming soon. All around us, we see the "beginning of birth pains," in Jesus' words (Matt. 24:8): Wars, nation rising against nation; famines, earthquakes and other natural disasters—signs that the Lord will be coming soon. The Lord's judgment is surely coming! Those "who trust in idols, who say to images, 'You are our gods,' will be turned back in utter shame." Psalm 115 observed: "Their idols...have mouths, but cannot speak, eyes, but cannot see. They have ears, but cannot hear, noses, but cannot smell....Those who make them will be like them, and so will all who trust in them" (Ps. 115:4-8). Those blind to the ways of God and refuse to see, will become like the idols they made: Blind and senseless, doomed to eternal death of hell.

"Look, you blind, and see!" Repent before the day of judgment comes, which can come at any time. Repent before the time comes when we will permanently be unable to see. And as we repent, we will see the Lord's light.

The Lord promises: "I will lead the blind by ways they have not known, along unfamiliar paths I will guide them. I will turn the darkness into light before them and make the rough places smooth." In our spiritual blindness we were unable to find our way back to God. So God promised to send the light to us. He sent his one and only Son, Jesus. As Jesus told his disciples, "While I am in the world, I am the light of the world." He not only gave sight to the blind, as we saw in today's gospel reading, but he brought light into our dark world by being a perfect, sinless Savior who overcame the prince of darkness, Satan. He shines with his truth and love. In the greatest act of love ever, Jesus even endured darkness on Calvary. For three hours the world was blackened; the sun did not shine. The Son of God was enduring the darkness we deserved; he was suffering hell on the cross as he hung there dying. By enduring our darkness, Jesus brought light to us with forgiveness.

On the cross Jesus was forsaken by his God. He did it in our place, so that God's promise to us will come true: "These are the things I will do; I will not forsake them." Even though we were blind to God's ways in our sinfulness; even though we still stumble in sin and darkness; even though we are not always faithful, God will remain faithful; the Lord will lead us to his light; the Lord will make us who are blind to see the light of our Savior.

Isaiah tells us how we'll see: "It pleased the LORD for the sake of his righteousness to make his law great and glorious." Often in the prophets the word "law" refers not only to God's commandments, but also his whole Word, including his promises. God's Word is great and glorious because it is a means of grace, the way the Holy Spirit shines Jesus' light into our hearts. Peter wrote, "You will do well to pay attention to [the prophetic message], as to a light shining in a dark place" (2 Pe. 1:19).

This past week we've noticed how light it is at the beginning of our evenings, thanks to Daylight Savings Time. It gives us a chance to go out and do things around supper time, or even after dinner. We Christians have the Light of the world with us all throughout the day. So don't go "blind" any longer, chasing after idols and blinding ourselves to the truths of God's Word. See the light! And live in the light of Jesus, following him in faith, until he takes us to heaven where we won't need the sun any longer, just the Son of God, the One who gives us light. Amen.